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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER

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RESULT OF OUR COMPETITION.

In the first number of this paper a series of prizes was offered for a variety of designs, and a large number of letters were received stating that it was the intention of the writers to enter the competition, in either one of the classes named. On March 1st the competition closed, and designs were received from about one-fifth of those who had sent notice of their intention to do so; perhaps the remainder were frightened off by the high quality of work that we have been publishing.

It was one of the conditions of the competition that there should be no award of prizes in any class, in which there were less than Three competitors, and this requirement was met in only one class of the Twenty-nine enumerated in the circulars sent to those asking for them. The class thus favored was the Professional Designs for Dining Room Furniture, in which Eight were submitted, while in the Students Class for Dining Room Furniture Two were sent; thus making Ten designs for Dining Room Furniture out of a total of Twenty-nine, the other Nineteen being divided between *Eleven* classes.

It is quite useless to speculate about the causes that produce a state of mind so peculiar as to inspire such a proportion of work for Dining Rooms.

Some of the work is almost unworthy of consideration, some extremely impracticable, and there is a lamentable absence of the boldness and beauty of treatment and design that may be found in the samples of work by Mr. Vinal, on page 11, Messrs. Herts Brothers, on page 10, and many other original works that may be found in our pages. We think that the results prove most conclusively the truth of what we have frequently said about the lack of proper technical education in this country. The paucity of striking work from professional designers can partially be explained by the fact, that as soon as a person having any apparent amount of artistic and practical appreciation and knowledge of furniture designing, presents his talents to the attention of our large manufacturers, he is certain of being speedily employed, and placed under engagements not to furnish designs to others than his employers.

There is probably no business that offers more openings than this, but alas, there are very few who, having the artistic sense, are willing to enter upon the course of study which is necessary to enable the artistic and the practical to work together. We need a resuscitation of the old-fashioned apprentice system, in part, at least.

The successful competitors in the Professional Designs for Dining Room Furniture were "Epicure" for the best design, and "Sea Horse" for the second best, although there was but a bare majority of the judges in favor of "Sea Horse" as against "Duke H."

The awards were decided by Mr. Wheelock of Messrs. Nelson, Matter & Co.; Messrs. Herts Bros.;

Mr. Marcotte of Messrs. Marcotte & Co.; Messrs. Brown & Bliss and Mr. Palmer of Messrs. Palmer & Embury; representative gentlemen, who manifested great interest in the matter.

The Dining Room designs will be duly published, and also some of the others which contain creditable suggestions.

"Why Certainly" sent three designs, which were good, practical work, lacking only the more ornate treatment of his successful competitors.

"Young America," "Rockwood," "Tag," "Spero Meliora," "Figaro" and "A. T. Botano," would all have had an excellent chance to obtain a prize, if their classes had been filled.

"Ray de Gislebert" sent in several designs which, although remarkably original, are so impracticable that they could have been considered only as evidences of an untrained artistic sentiment.

* * * * *

While preparing the above for the press we received a letter from one of the most prominent manufacturers of Philadelphia, which is so pertinent to the subject that we append a part of it:

"The article on Art Education in your March issue is true and timely, and all who have given the matter thought must agree with you, unless their judgments are clouded by self-interest.

* * * * *

"The writer of this has been deeply interested in the development of 'Practical Art,' and has watched the method of one of our largest training schools, where several hundred young ladies are engaged in what they fondly suppose to be a course of preparation for earning a living, in a quiet, genteel and pleasant way. Thousands of dollars are received yearly from those confiding persons, many of whom can poorly afford the expenses, with the tacit (at least) promise that the best energies of the instructors shall be devoted to help them accomplish their desires. And what are the results? Attend one of the annual exhibitions and behold them hung upon the walls, and scattered round the rooms, and then judge how faithfully teachers have fulfilled their promises. In some things, the work of the pupils is well done, but this is largely in 'Imaginative Art,' but when you look for the 'Practical,' how tame and discouraging the results.

* * * * *

"One hazards nothing in saying that more that is really practical in decorative art can be found in one copy of your journal, than at the exhibitions of years of study at the school to which reference has been made, and probably this applies with equal truthfulness to most of our schools of art study.

"Instruction is on a stereotyped plan, year after year the same. The teachers dozing, and forgetting that appreciation of art on the part of the people of this country is developing wonderfully.

"In our branch of decorative art, and undoubtedly in many others also, there has been a complete revolution in the past five or six years *outside of our schools*.

* * * * *

"As you say, 'There is a field open to designers.' It is an ample one, and were a tithe of the money now received by our schools devoted to the practical, that is to the theoretical and the imaginative, much good would be accomplished, and many blighted hopes and bitter disappointments would be avoided by hard-working and needy students."

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